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## Gregoire proposes \$42 million to clean up Puget Sound

05:43 PM PST on Monday, December 19, 2005

Associated Press



Karin Czulik / KING5.com

The threat of an oil spill is one of many threats Puget Sound faces.

SEATTLE - Gov. Christine Gregoire on Monday proposed spending \$42 million to restore and protect Puget Sound, and named a panel of environmental, tribal and political leaders to research cleanup efforts across the country.

As part of the package, Gregoire proposed \$26 million to clean up toxic sites, prevent oil spills and continuing toxic contamination, and restore near-shore, estuary and salmon habitats.

Earlier this year, a state Department of Ecology study warned of the changing nature of pollution in the region. Tests on sediment gathered at 10 sites stretching from Bellingham to the Olympia area showed that mud and sand at the bottom of Washington's inland marine waters are increasingly tainted by pollution from vehicle exhaust.

Researchers said pollutants called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, fall into the

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water from airborne exhaust or are washed into the sound by rainfall. Those chemicals can cause liver lesions and tumors in fish, and can change the growth rates and behavior of sediment-dwelling invertebrates.

Gregoire said she also will seek legislation requiring major oil-transport companies to train for spill prevention and cleanup, and she wants to regulate tanker trucks that refuel boats from docks -- an activity she said is unregulated and on the rise.

Her plan calls for Ecology to establish a state oil spill transfer inspection program and employ additional spill responders to be available to Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties, which have seen an increase of 300 spills a year, she said.

Monday's announcement was part of series of pre-legislative events and news conferences the Democratic governor is holding to outline her views for the upcoming legislative session. The \$42 million is part of Gregoire's 2006 supplemental budget proposal, which she has said she will announce Tuesday.

Gregoire's funding proposal also includes \$6.5 million to provide loans to homeowners to repair or replace failing septic systems. Many of the Puget Sound region's 472,000 operating septic systems are aging and in disrepair. They've allowed human wastes to reach the sound, forcing the closure of shellfish beds.

Gregoire proposes \$8.5 million for projects to control stormwater, remove creosote logs from shorelines, and improve environmental performance at state parks, beginning with wastewater and sewer projects at six marine state parks.

In naming a research panel, Gregoire said she's setting a 15-year deadline to improve the sound.

"I am charging the Puget Sound Partnership with engaging a broad cross-section of agencies, tribes and citizens to develop recommendations for me, the Legislature, and Congress for preserving the health and ecosystem of Puget Sound, and to help educate and enlist the public in achieving recovery of the sound by 2020," Gregoire told a news conference at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center.

Members serving with Gregoire on the panel include Salmon Recovery Funding Board Chair William Ruckelshaus; U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash.; Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Chairman Billy Frank Jr.; King County Executive Ron Sims; University of Washington President Mark Emmert; and Kathy Fletcher, executive director for People for Puget Sound.

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